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FLOWERS OF A MYSTIC GARDEN

FROM THE WORKS OF JOHN
RUYSBROECK. TRANSLATED
FROM THE FRENCH OF
ERNEST HELLO BY C. E. S.

"God, of Thy Goodness, give me Thyself
... and if I ask anything that is less, ever
me wanteth, but only in Thee have I all."

Julian of Norwich.

London :

JOHN M. WATKINS,
21 Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road,
1912

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THE
ADORNMENT OF THE
SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

SIMPLICITY OF INTENTION

By what path do we go forth to seek the Lord?

By the way of perfect likeness and fullest union. Every good deed, however small, if it be directed to God by simplicity of intention, increases in us the Divine likeness, and deepens in us the flow of eternal life.

Simplicity of intention gathers together in the unity of the spirit the scattered powers of the soul, and joins the spirit itself to God. It is this same simplicity that refers all to God and that makes of our virtues an offering to Him. Entering into and transcending itself, traversing all worlds of being, surpassing all creatures, it meets God in its own depths. It is the source and end of all virtues, their power and glory.

I call singleness of purpose that which sees only God, referring all things to Him according to duty and truth. It casts out all pretence, hypocrisy, and duplicity.

In every action of our lives we must hold to this simplicity, must practise and cultivate it above all else. It is this which leads man into the presence of God, which gives light and courage, freeing him to-day as on the Day of Judgment from all vain and unworthy fear. It is the single eye of which the Lord speaks, as giving light to the whole body, the whole active life, and delivering it from evil. It is the interior operation of the enlightened spirit, the foundations of its Divine life. Trusting in God and faithful to Him it has hope and charity as companions. It conquers our sinful affections, and gives peace, stilling the discordant tumult of our nature. It is the excellence of the virtues, peace, hope, and confidence, abiding in us always, to-day and on the Day of Judgment.

By it alone are we secure in grace and in the Divine likeness in the unity of the spirit, seeking God by the path of the virtues. It is this simplicity which will, at the last, offer to God our whole vital activity, fashioning us from hour to hour to a more faithful resemblance.

It is this same simplicity which will carry us beyond even ourselves into the transcendent abyss where God dwells, giving us the peace of the abyss, and that heritage that has been prepared to us from all eternity.

The whole life of the spirit and its activity consist solely in the Divine likeness and this simplicity of intention; and the final peace abides on the heights in simplicity also, in simplicity of essence.

Men possess virtues and the Divine likeness in differing measure; in greater or less degree have they found their own essence in the depth of themselves, according to their dignity. But God fulfils all; and each, clearer or fainter, according to the measure of

his love, possesses the sense of God's presence in the depths of his own being.

This contact is Christ's call to the spirit: "Pass out of thyself, act in the depths." It invites, attracts, and draws the spirit to that deepest point in its own interior life at which the creature is able to act. Then by the power of love the spirit passes beyond the region of effort into that unity out of whose midst sprang the living flame that touched it. But this contact makes its own demands: the intelligence shall know God in its light; love shall enjoy God without intermediary. This is what the spirit desires supremely, naturally, and supernaturally. And as a result of the contact, by virtue of this interior discernment, the spirit withdraws into itself, and from its own abyss contemplates the sanctuary whence came this Divine impulse. Reason and human seeing fail on this threshold, for the supernal light, eternal and limitless,

whence proceeded the touch, blinds all created light, and human intelligence depending on created light is like an owl in the splendour of the sun. It is then that the spirit experiences a new quickening, a new need, sprung jointly from God and its own nature, to examine and penetrate this contact, to demand of it what it is and what God is. The spirit enters on the quest of the unknown, and pursuing to its source the flame that springs up in it, yields itself with avidity to this terrible inquisition; but it seeks without finding: I do not know what this is that is called contemplation.

Out of this contemplation there arises a supernal light that no eyes can look on without being seized and broken and blinded. This light operates with a majesty that dominates the spirit in heaven and on earth. Those who by the completeness of this interior act have probed and searched the abyss within themselves to its final depths, wherein is found the doorway

into eternal life, can feel the contact. None the less, this light of God burns with such an intensity that the spirit fails, and powerless to take another step, yields wholly, without effort or resistance, to the majesty of the Unknowable. Reason and intelligence halt at this door, but love that has also heard the call knows it as a command, and though blinded like the others, would go forward, for through all the blindness it has held to its desire to participate. At the limit of its strength and power the intelligence halts and remains outside, but love enters.

THE VALLEY OF HUMILITY

When the rays of the sun shining in its zenith pierce the depths of a valley folded between high mountains the lowlands receive a splendour, a fervour, a plenitude of light beyond any experienced by the plains.

When he who seeks dwells in the depths of his own worthlessness, aware in himself only of failure and helplessness; when beholding the multitude of his sins and transgressions he feels incapable of progress or perseverance; when in the full light of his poverty he sees what in reality he is, he treads the valley of humility. Overcome by his failure and conscious of his helplessness he lays them trembling before the mercy of his Lord. He has looked on the heights of heaven, and turning to his own lowliness the valley deepens.

This is why the Christ-sun, from the summit of His ascent, seated at the right hand of the Father, sheds countless rays of light and glory into the depths of the penitent. He cannot remain untouched when such a suppliant lays all his prayers at His feet. Then from the sides of the valley rise two mountains, the two desires, to serve and to praise, to possess healing and virtue.

These mountains rise higher than the heavens ; they reach to God without intermediary in supplication for a lovingkindness which is measureless, and which flows forth increasingly, for the soul has now the power to receive and to contain its fullness. The coming of the powers heralds the advent of Jesus, and the soul that has asked receives three gifts : it is illumined by grace, clothed in love, and quickened in virtue.

ADORATION

As the man meditates on the inconceivable plenitude of God, His sovereignty, and the goodness and mercy which are His and which He shows to man, the soul is lifted, and on the wings of adoration is borne into the tides of grace that flow from Him. The man contemplates profoundly the mystery of the Divine Essence, the beatitude possessed by God and the saints, and the ineffable operation of the Divine Persons acting in grace and in glory, naturally and supernaturally, throughout space and time, in the saints and in men, in rational and in irrational creatures, in spirit and in matter, according to the need, the capacity and the dignity of each. He contemplates the heaven and the earth, the sun and moon, the elements, all created beings, the move-

ments of the heavens, the patrimony of all the living.

Everything gives itself, God gives Himself, the angels give themselves. The rational soul belongs to the whole body and to all its members ; it exists throughout the body, entire in every part of it, and cannot be divided except by hypothesis. The higher and lower powers of man, so infinitely far apart to the eye of reason, constitute the one man in that unity which joins together body and soul.

God is in all and in each. All is through Him, all is in Him and of Him ; the heavens, the earth, and all nature. As the man contemplates with the deep seeing inner vision the perfection of the Divine Nature, the shining treasures of God and His Majesty, he is lost in awe and in wonder at the Divine sublimity and the Divine fidelity ; and there arises within the depths of his soul faith and hope and an ineffable joy penetrating and encompassing all its powers, even the unity of the Spirit.

ON HOLY JOY

The soul that has stood in the presence of Christ experiences a great sweetness, which deepening, passes into that holy joy that is the yielding of the soul to the Divine love. If every earthly pleasure were melted into a single experience and bestowed upon one man it would be as nothing when measured by the joy of which I write ; for here it is God who passes into the depths of us in all His purity, and the soul is not only filled but overflowing. This experience is that light that makes manifest to the soul the terrible desolation of such as live divorced from love ; it melts the man utterly ; he is no longer master of his joy.

Such possession produces intoxication, the state of the spirit in which its bliss transcends the uttermost bounds of anticipation or desire. Sometimes

the ecstasy pours forth in song, sometimes in tears : at one moment it finds expression in movement, at others in the intense stillness of burning, voiceless feeling.

Some men knowing this bliss wonder if others feel God as they do ; some are assured that no living creature has ever had such experiences as theirs ; there are those who wonder that the world is not set aflame by this joy ; and there are others who marvel at its nature, asking whence it comes, and what it is. The body itself can know no greater pleasure upon earth than to participate in it ; and there are moments when the soul feels it must shiver to fragments in the poignancy of this experience. Then from out this intensity of feeling springs action, an act of grace. . . . "Father, I am not worthy . . . but I have need of this measureless goodness . . ." And through the gateway of humility the man passes to a higher state.

ON ECSTASY AND REVELATIONS

There are times during the tempests of love when we are rapt away in spirit beyond the world of the senses ; then the ecstatic hears words and sees visions which reveal some truth, and sometimes for him unveil the future. Such truths are always of service to himself or others ; they are visions or revelations. When we experience them in the form of images and symbols they are usually the work of the angels, who under God's guidance unroll them before our eyes. If the revelation be purely intellectual and is only seen under forms having no analogies in the created world but by means of which God reveals Himself in the abyss, we are in the purely spiritual realm. We can still, however, describe and explain our experi-

ences. But sometimes the man passes beyond this region, though not yet transcending himself, and is borne into the incomprehensible. Here he can no longer explain how he sees or hears; this is ecstasy, and in this direct contemplation to hear and to see are one. This sovereign activity is from God alone, Who in such supreme moments meets the soul without intermediary. Sometimes a light shines in this night, and the spirit is rapt away; but the light fades and the man returns to himself. This action of God glorifies, and there are those in whom it has operated who become men of light.

The tempests of love have differing effects; sometimes a light shines forth; it is truly from God, but it shines in some medium. Then the soul and the spirit moving towards the light experience in this encounter an intolerable bliss, and there are times when the man is burnt up in the radiance. This is ecstasy, the

bliss that can never be described, and these are the veritable encounters : they come and we can only yield ourselves to them.

THE QUICKENING OF THE SPIRIT

The advent of Christ within the soul is a contact that quickens the interior abode of the spirit. When the most excellent faculties of the soul are conjoined above the utmost heights of virtue in the unity of the spirit the creature feels the touch of God. Only in this region of the unity of the spirit is this contact felt, and this is above the realm of reason, but not alien from it. The illumined reason shares the contact; in a lesser degree than love feels it, but it is shared, though without power to understand its mode. For it is a Divine operation, the source of all good. It is the last intermediary between God and the creature.

Higher yet, in the holy silence of the Divine darkness trembles a certain

clear light; it is the Holy Trinity.
From It comes the touch; the All
Powerful lives and moves in the spirit,
the spirit in Him.

THE VISITATION

When God has found a resting-place and a dwelling within the depths of our spirit, when by His grace and our likeness to our Father in Heaven there is found in us the unity of the spirit, God resolves to continually visit this unity and to glorify it perpetually by the Divine operation of His Word and the measureless outpouring of His love. It is His pleasure to dwell in the spirit quickened by love. When He has won and conquered and created in us His own likeness, He would seek that likeness, enrich it immeasurably with marvellous gifts, open within us the way to loftier virtues, create in us a more radiant likeness. It is Christ's will that we shall dwell in the essential unity of our spirit, and that we dwell there with Him, above creatures and their

human excellences, established in His riches, in the midst of His treasures. He wills that we shall be adorned by these gifts and graces, and that in the fullness of our active life amidst all its daily practical duties we yet enter continually into the depths of our spirit, into the unity and into the Divine likeness.

At each moment of time in the fullest meaning of the word *now* Christ is born in us and the Holy Ghost proceeds, bearing all Its gifts. May we offer to the adornment of these gifts of the Holy Ghost the likeness of Him in ourselves, but to His Divinely regenerating power may we offer the sacred unity of our essence!

ADVENT

The union of God with the soul takes place in the interior life and in exterior activity—in the active life of virtue. According to this union in the depths the spirit meets Christ directly, without intermediary. For this life that we live in the depths of ourselves is in the likeness of our eternal Prototype, and knows not separateness. This is why our spirit in its innermost and holiest life perpetually receives into the purity of its substance the seal and the Divine life of its Redeemer. It is the habitation of God Who dwells continually in His temple by a ceaseless advent and a perpetual renewal of His glory. He enters, but this was already His abode; wherein He dwells there He enters in; wherein He comes, therein was He already dwelling; and to that

place wherein He never was He never comes. He knows neither chance nor change. When He enters into you you were already His dwelling-place, for He never goes forth from Himself. Thus does the spirit possess God in the nudity of its substance, and God the spirit; it lives in God and God in it.

On the summit of the mountain the spirit has power to receive the Divine light and the wondrous gifts of God.

By the light of its Prototype which shines forth within its own depths the spirit finds the consummation of its unity as it merges in the Divine Essence and there enjoys eternal resemblance and eternal bliss. Yet as being created the man has remained unchanged; by the free-will of the very Holy Trinity his personality remains and must expand outwards after the manner of all creatures. For in him is repeated the incarnation of the Word.

The living and radiant image of the

Trinity and of the Unity subsist in him; his created substance is sealed with the likeness of its eternal Prototype as a clear mirror reflects an object, and perpetually illumined renews the image within itself. In this union the spirit depends neither upon itself nor any virtue in itself, but remains in God, depends from God and turns to God as to its eternal foundation.

ASCENSION

When the sun is in the sign of Cancer its heat is at its greatest intensity ; it draws up the mists of the earth and ripens its fruits. So it is when the Christ-sun rises above the mountain of the heart, when He rises higher than the Divine gifts, higher than the interior consolations and graces that flow from Him, when He rests motionless and alone above the summit of the spirit. When we no longer remain content with the gifts and the joys of the spirit bestowed upon the soul, when master of ourselves, transcending ourselves, we return towards our origin that we may be absorbed in the abyss, source of every perfection ; when this ascent of Christ in the soul takes place He draws in His ascending all our faculties and powers into Himself. No

interior joy or consolation may bar the way of this conquering love, nothing may hinder it, for it has willed to leave all behind and to be united to the beloved.

When the interior man has reached the heights the lower levels of himself are borne aloft in the upward flight. This is the first act of the Christ, to draw into heaven all the faculties and powers of the soul and to unite them to Himself. He calls and will not be denied. He bids the spirit rise out of itself and follow His call into Himself, and the attraction is ineffable; it is at once an interior invitation and a command of the Supreme Truth demanding the gift of our whole selves that it may unite us to itself.

This call is an inconceivable joy, an ocean from whose depths arises an august, transcendent activity; the man opens, expands, becomes a gulf; his faculties are incapable of obeying his commands, but the desire is there. This invitation is the shining of the

Eternal Sun, and it is the joy that it awakens that unfolds the man, enlarges him so that this gulf which has opened in the depths of his soul will not close. It is the wound of love; the most exquisite and the most terrible thing in the world; for such is the nature of this Sun that its rays eternally pouring down upon him who has once been pierced, continually increase and deepen his wounds.

THE MEETING WITH GOD UPON THE MOUNTAIN

The immeasurable ray of God, merged in boundless light, the living source of all the gifts and virtues, shines into the hidden depths of our spirit as a clear radiance, incomprehensible, full of darkness, full of joy. Within the heart of this light the spirit dwells in the peace which knows neither term nor limit, and which can be known of none save itself. If this peace could have been conceived and understood of us it would have fallen within our measure, and so, unable to overcome us, it would have become for us not peace but eternal stress.

Pure and measureless love awakens joy within us ; but love is a fathomless and soundless abyss ; abyss calls to abyss ; it is the Abyss of God calling the men of God. And this supreme

invocation, this call out of the depths of the Abyss, which bids us come, appears to us as a shining dawn of essential light. It encompasses us and draws us and we pass into the darkness, into the infinite darkness of God.

United to the Spirit of God we are given power to go forth to meet Him Who has called us ; and with Him and in Him we shall possess healing and joy.

THE THREE OPERATIONS OF
GRACE

I

SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION

In this meeting with God upon the mountain there are three chief operations. Sometimes the interior man, lifted above his own powers to the heights of simplicity, experiences interiorly this act of participation; and it is on these heights that he is struck by a light flashing forth from the Divine Unity. This lightning flash is the surface of darkness, the face of the nudity, of the ineffable *nothing*; and the man wanders in the encompassing darkness; he has lost his nature and is astray in this eclipse. For when he enters the nudity he is destitute of his own light, bereft of his powers of seeing, and is wholly impregnated,

penetrated, and transfigured by light itself.

In the *nothing* he finds all his powers fail him. He and they are utterly vanquished by the immeasurable activity of God ; yet he triumphs over his conqueror by the unity of spirit whose secret is communicated to him. In this intimate union spiritual perception, that thrice hallowed possession, becomes his, and plunging into God he is intoxicated by participation in the bliss of essential life. And this participation invokes within the very source and centre of his human powers a plenitude of sensible love that in its penetrating potency flows into the physical life, to the very members of his body.

The interior man remains paralysed, overpowered, stupefied by this efflux ; its substance eludes him. Yet in the depths of his soul and of his body he knows and feels a unique and piercing radiance, full of well-being and joy.

II

WISDOM

The interior man turns towards God in adoration, offering himself as a sacrifice upon the high altar ; and God comes to meet him with or without intermediary, bestowing the gift of wisdom. This wisdom is the source of all the virtues, the spur in the quest of perfection ; arousing the man and urging him to the practice of effective virtue. In the interior man it becomes a consuming flame, that not all the gifts of God can extinguish. All that God bestows, save only the gift of Himself, appears all too small and mean ; and desire increases and longing deepens.

Then the man becomes aware of a central point within the depths of himself, the birthplace and haven of all goodness. Within this sanctuary dwells love, and within it the man offers up all his activities to God. And

his hunger and thirst after God grow so immeasurably that he feels he must faint from the extremity of his longing. At each lightning flash from God that strikes into the depths of his soul he is enkindled and enflamed anew ; he dies in life and arises again in death ; for it is a loving ardour that possesses the likeness of that Unity which is the object of his search ; and the hunger and thirst are perpetually renewed.

This action is more effective and more sure than the first ; for the intense burning activity of desire and of love is the source of supreme peace. Activity precedes, accompanies, and follows peace, its certain consummation.

Without the deeds of charity none may conquer love nor obtain God, neither keep love once conquered. The rest and delay that a man may find within the creature are the real obstacles for the spiritual man : for God alone can satisfy the hunger which consumes him.

III

PEACE AND ACTIVITY

The third action is the result of the other two and is the living of the interior life according to righteousness. God meeting man, with or without intermediary, demands of him the perfect surrender of himself and a life of activity; and these two are not irreconcilable but confirm and minister to one another. The life of the interior man consists in activity and peace; at each moment of that life he is completely in the one and perfectly in the other. Dwelling entirely in God he possesses deep peace; dwelling wholly in himself he performs the works of love. God ordains that he shall perpetually renew these two movements of life; and righteousness demands that he shall do the will of God. Each Divine influx of light invokes within the spirit a movement full of activity and of surrender to God. Within this

movement the active virtues come to new birth, within it the abyss of peace sounds new depths. By this same act God gives Himself and His gifts, and the man makes oblation of all his substance and of his whole exterior life.

By the movement of a God-awakened impulse the spirit of the contemplative flows into its Lord, and in the ecstasy becomes transfigured. He feels the living touch of intelligence and wisdom, he is illumined, enfolded ; yet he burns with thirst and dies of hunger, for the bread of the angels is before his eyes. He strives and labours for he is in sight of rest, an exile beholding his fatherland.

He sees in the heat of the battle the crown of the conqueror ; within sight are consolation, peace, joy, splendour and plenitude, and glory and light beyond count or measure. He is shown beatitude of the spirit, and the hand of God pointing to bliss keeps love aflame in the midst of human activity.

The just man who builds his life on peace and on active virtue raises an everlasting house, and at life's close he is carried to yet loftier heights. He draws near to God clothed in intimate love and perpetual activity, and finds heaven in Him, freed from all remorse or fear. Merged in God he gives himself to all creatures, full of activity, virtue, justice, and universal love. He who does not unite in his life peace and activity is far from righteousness. He who unites rest and activity has found safety. The just are like a double mirror, reflecting two kinds of images; from above the likeness of God and His gifts, and from below the images of creatures and objects. Such men can fearlessly enter within themselves, and knowing no doubt, can give themselves to just works.

Very far from steadfastness is the man of this world. He goes out of himself without need or reason, giving himself to outward things, called by

the voice of the senses, not led by light. Thus he falls into venial sin; and venial sin in the life of the contemplative is as a drop of cold water in a fiery furnace.

FIAT LUX!

Our Father in Heaven is the Father of light : He it is who said : " Let there be light ! " and continually and directly, without intermediary, He utters that single Word, unique and eternal, the Word of the Abyss.

In this Word He utters Himself and all things ; and this Word of God, expressed in human language, is none other than :

" I am here ! "

" Look ! "

But it is the generation of eternal light, wherein eternal bliss is seen and contemplated.

This contemplation demands three conditions. The soul must be ordered and adorned by the practical exercise of truth and of righteousness, and this exterior practice must help, not encumber, the soul. He only is a con-

templative who is the slave of nothing, not even of his virtues. Beyond all else it requires that he shall cleave to God by the operation of love, that ardent white flame, inextinguishable, that fervour which burns open the spirit. And lastly, he must lose himself, without confusion of substance, in the holy darkness, where joy delivers him out of himself, never again to find himself according to the human mode.

In this abyss of darkness where love lights the fire of death, I see the dawn of eternal life and the manifestation of God. Here is born and shines forth a certain inconceivable light illuminating the eternal life, and in it things grow visible to us. But the light shines in the pure essence of the spirit, above the gifts, in the void where bliss has delivered man out of himself, and where he receives it in the fullest measure of which the creature is capable. Yet is this dark light, in which the spirit contemplates all that desire can conceive, of such a nature

that the contemplative dwelling in
peace in the depths, sees and feels
nothing beyond its ineffable radiance.

Blessed are the eyes that have seen !

THE COMING OF THE BRIDEGROOM

When we have learned to open our eyes in the interior light we can contemplate in joy the continual coming of the Bridegroom. It is a perpetual genesis, an ever-recurrent dawn that knows no setting. The abyss whence this radiance shines forth is living and life-giving, it is itself the radiance for ever dawning and never setting upon the dweller in the sanctuary. In that holy place there is no activity save a ceaseless beholding of the light, sustained solely by the operation of the light.

The Bridegroom meets us with His gifts ; but according to the mystery of Divine activity He comes perpetually and by a perpetual first coming. For this advent, which is outside time, operates in an eternal *now*, and the

sleepless longing for Him ceaselessly renews the joy of this encounter. His gifts are boundless and infinite, for they are Himself. The eye of the spirit opens wide to behold the face of the Bridegroom till it has neither limit nor measure, nor ever closes on the mystery of God. The capacity of the soul, increased by the arrival of the Bridegroom, seems to transcend its own boundaries in entering into the magnitude of Him Who comes.

God in the depths of us receives God Who comes to us ; it is God contemplating God ; God in Whom dwell healing and peace.

UNION

When the contemplative has returned towards his eternal Prototype, when by the way of the Son he has found the bosom of the Father, illumined by Divine light he receives perpetually a new, Divine birth, for he is in the likeness of the light. Some ineffable operation, like the embrace of God, lifts him upon the heights of beatitude. The Father turns actively towards His Son, the Divine Wisdom; He Who is the source of all beings turns with all that He holds within Himself; and the Son turns with all that is within Himself, with the world of the living, towards the Father of Whom He was begotten; from their union proceeds the Holy Ghost, Who is their love, and Who dwells with the two in unity of substance.

So vast, so penetrating and all

embracing is this active and possessing love of the Trinity that in its presence the silence of the creature is absolute. The wonder of the Inconceivable, held within this love, transcends and surpasses the power of created intelligence. But if love is borne into this region where miracles are known and experienced without surprise, the spirit, transcending itself, consummates with God the mystery of the Divine marriage, and in this union of the living depths, possessing himself, and clothed anew in his eternal likeness, the man contemplates and enjoys, after the Divine mode, the treasures that are God Himself.

The Joy of this Divine union is renewed at each moment of time within the depths of our spirit by an unceasing operation.

In the eternal generation of the Son all things are actually present to the Father ; in the eternal proceeding of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son all things are immediate

objects of love. For the union of the Father and the Son is supremely active and we are close held within it in the depths of eternal love by the virtue of the Holy Ghost.

The immeasurable abyss of Divinity is a holy darkness which contains, enfolds, and transcends every attribute in the all-embracing circle of essential Unity, and the mystery of possession is consummated in these nameless depths.

The exaltation of this joy is a certain immersion in essential Unity, whence all the names of God, whence all the lights that burn in the mirror of Divine truth flow into the nameless simplicity of the Essence, wherein measure is unknown. This is the inexhaustible and inconceivable simplicity of the abyss, where all things are held in beatific possession.

The abyss itself is contained by nothing, unless it be by the essential Unity. I am not speaking of the Divine Persons, nor of that which is life in

God. I speak here of love's enfolding, of eternal rest in the outpouring of that joy which dissolves us in itself. The spirits that are gifted with devotion seek eternal rest in this heaven. It is the dark silence in which the spirits of love are in a certain sense lost. And we, if we have so acted as to prepare ourselves, when we shall be delivered from our prison, will sail into the ocean of God, with none to hinder or say us nay.

May we by the power of the Divine Love, that has never turned from the prayers of a suppliant, obtain the possession of God, pure contemplation of the Holy Trinity, and the sublime joy of essential Unity ! Amen !

CONTEMPLATION

THE PRAYER OF JESUS

UNITY : Such is the purport of the prayer of Jesus to His Father that His friends might be one in Him as He and His Father were one in the unity of the Holy Ghost. He would be in us and we in Him ; He asked for us unity, the refuge of the Father, and the possession of the Holy Ghost.

Of all Christ's prayers this is the most fervent, the triumph of love.

According to St John, it is triple : for Jesus prayed that His own might be in Him, where He dwelt, and that they should contemplate His light. All the just are united to Him by the intervention of His grace, and by their virtues. The love of God is continually poured out upon us, ever bearing new gifts, and those who contemplate in love suffer a perpetual renewal of activity, virtue, and

righteousness. This union which the Divine plenitude achieves both in soul and body begins in this life and is consummated in the next.

But going beyond this, Jesus prayed that He might dwell in His own and they in Him, and this is the immediate union ; for the love of God is not only an outpouring, it is also an ingathering. The disciples are the men of interior light, and their higher faculties are raised above their own might of virtue into the nudity of the Essence, and are melted into a certain inconceivable simplicity which, owing to the absence of all intermediaries, bestows upon them plenitude and increase.

The third demand of Jesus soars yet higher than the first two, for He asks that we may be one as He and His Father are one. He does not ask that our substance shall be confounded with the Divine substance ; such would be impossible ; but desires that we may be one in the unity of possession, in the unity of beatitude.

If you feel between God and yourself this threefold union, then the prayer of Jesus has been heard in you; and you will dwell with Him in joy and eternal possession; and eternal activity and eternal rest will be consummated for you without fear in the superessential Essence.

You will enter and go forth, and bread and wine will be for ever assured to you. The men of this race are love's drunkards; they are asleep in God in the depths of the hidden splendour.

I can say no more, but those who possess need no words. If these things be clear to you, then the love of which your love is the disciple will teach you all truth. To those who seek in the outer world after vain consolations the experience of joy is forbidden, and to such I might speak for eternity words bearing no meaning. Those who give themselves wholly to the exterior activity to the forgetting of the interior life, or those who in

interior idleness scorn activity, cannot understand.

Though the heights of faith and contemplation rise beyond works and virtues, none the less the life of sentiency and reason has place in man and is as imperishable as his essence itself. Though the union of possession transcends desire and the spirit of contemplation, yet contemplation and desire persist inviolate. Such is the interior life of the spirit, and when the man mounts the pathway of light his sensible life cleaves to his spirit, his sentient nature joins itself to God by virtue and love, and his whole nature is filled with light.

Between God and his interior life he feels an immediate union; his higher faculties depend from God by a ceaseless love, penetrated and quickened by Divine Truth, established in a freedom which has forgotten itself. His spirit filled with God knows no measure. He moves in plenitude and increase, and dwells in

the superessential Unity in which lies the beginning and end of all life. If we will walk with God the paths of the higher love, we shall find His ceaseless activity joined to His endless rest, and we shall draw near, and we shall enter in, and this will be eternal peace.

THE LIGHT OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE

Contemplation is an understanding transcending the ways of knowledge, a science above the methods of learning. It is beyond the reason, whose efforts to fathom fall short, whose strongest flights fail to reach to this contemplation in its own sphere. It is a luminous ignorance, a glorious mirror into which shines the eternal splendour of God ; it is illimitable and the steps of reason will never lead us to it. None the less this ignorance is not God ; it is the light of the contemplative.

Those who live in this habitation of ignorance and of the Divine light find in themselves, as it were, a waste and desert place. This luminous ignorance, though in itself beyond reason, is yet not alien from it ; for it holds all

things within its view, knowing no wonder or surprise. It beholds something: but what is it? We do not know. It is an excellence surpassing all else ; it is not this, not that.

INTERIOR DEVOTION

If we will cleave to God by interior devotion, we shall feel within the depths of the will and in the core of love the concurrence of the spirit, a living stream whose waters have their source in eternal life.

Our intelligence will behold the eternal sun, and the light will shine from the face of Jesus. The Father will deliver our memory out of bondage, bestowing upon it the supreme gift of the nudity. He will bid us come to His eternal truth; will command and compel us. God opens to love the doors of heaven that it may lay hands upon the desired treasures. The soul opens to God its powers, longing to receive the Divine Substance and to give its own. It wills, but fails, for the more it gives and receives the keener grows the hunger to give and

to receive. It can neither pour itself utterly into God nor receive God wholly. All that it can hold of Him shrinks to nothing in sight of what it cannot possess. Whence arises a tempest of love in the soul that cannot approach God in His height, nor in His depth, that cannot hold Him nor renounce Him. No words can tell the hunger of desire, nor paint the storm within the realm of love. Love burns at one moment, and the next freezes ; it fears and grows bold, rejoices and saddens, hopes, despairs, weeps, mourns, sings, and adores. It is an intoxication whirling the soul into incredible tumults ; yet within its depths is the sanest of all lives.

When the man feels his spirit fail within him, unable to soar any higher, the Spirit of God intervenes. When the man in spite of this passion of unappeasable desire can no longer cleave to God, the Spirit of God comes as a terrible flame, burning, consuming, all-devouring, and the man forgets his

bread, his wine, and his blood, aware of naught save uniting love.

“Silence, human spirit! Peace, created powers! Sleep! Sleep! The ways are open, the rivers flow! You shall be flooded beyond all desire!”

This first Divine operation lifts and transports the man. The second, which seems to belong more especially to the Son, bears the man beyond reason, beyond seeing, above judgment; the naked intelligence is penetrated and illumined by Divine light, and the single eye draws from its contact with this radiance power to contemplate eternal verity.

The third action creates a void in memory, despoils it of forms and images, and carries the naked spirit towards its Divine joy; and the man, established and steadfast in God, therein finds his power, activity, and interior and exterior freedom. Knowledge and understanding are conferred upon him; he judges all that pertains

to the province of reason, and in a region beyond suffers, through an interior operation, the Divine transfiguration. But the single eye and the Divine Essence are here above any mode or manner of being. It has no measure. Beyond words, beyond guise or symbol or comparison, it manifests without image to simple nudity. One may perhaps place upon the way certain images, certain symbols, to point the path to the kingdom of God. One may see it as a shoreless sea of white-hot flame, wherein the creation is burnt to fire; and the fire, motionless, burning within itself.

Here essential love enters into possession of itself in consuming peace, into the joy of God and the sanctified, above form, beyond thought. A sea of peace, a river, an inexhaustible abyss, wherein the children of light dwell with God in bliss; and joy says to measure, "I do not know thee," and leads her own into a solitary and

trackless immensity wherein is neither road nor path, nor boundary, neither beginning nor end, naught that can be expressed. This is beatitude in its simplicity, essential to God, super-essential to us, beyond and unknown to reason.

If we would know it by experience we must rise in spirit to the Uncreated, to the eternal Centre where all paths begin and end, where they lose their names, where they find the one Unity without losing their own nature or their own essence. We shall remain what we are, in our created substance; distinction will persist; none the less impelling love will bear us into the Uncreated, and we shall transcend ourselves in depth, in size, and in extent, and we shall be lost to ourselves, never to be restored.

According to the prophet Ezekiel, the four animals pass onwards, never to return. So it is with the sanctified; borne beyond themselves into limitless joy; they have passed away, never to

return, never to look backwards. It is the seventh vigil, peace, the consummation of beatitude. It is where we shall dwell higher than ourselves in simplicity.

Yet never forget the interior and exterior acts, never forget preparation, discipline, and virtue; for the different degrees of virtue, fidelity to God, charity, wisdom, activity, produce varying degrees of beatitude.

Our hunger and thirst after God will depend upon the merit we have won. Oh, Superessential Beatitude! You are the Lord! Round you we shall circle, and we shall flame in measureless unity, in plenitude, in communion, beyond the capacity of our united powers. And the ranks of the men of God and of the angels will be established on earth and in heaven for ever, as it was eternally in the Divine ordination.

May the hunger of our hearts find voice to pray! May the abyss of power whose boundaries are invisible,

engulf us! May its love be unveiled
and shine before our eyes! For were
we covered with mortal wounds and
this love should encircle us we should
be made whole!

THE FOOD OF ANGELS

The first token of love is that Jesus has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink ; this is the miracle of miracles before which we wonder and adore. The property of love is to be always giving and always receiving ; and the love of Jesus is hungry and generous. All that He has, all that He is, He gives ; all that we have and all that we are He takes. He asks more than we of ourselves can give. His insatiable hunger would possess us utterly. He enters into the very marrow of our bones, and the more lovingly we give to His hunger the more fully do we possess Him. But He consumes us without ever satisfying this illimitable hunger and immeasurable thirst. He knows how poor we are, but He takes no account of it ; He spares us nothing. He

creates in us bread to feed Himself, first burning up in His love our vices, faults, and sins; then when He beholds us pure He swoops upon us like a bird of prey to consume our whole life, that He may change it into His. And our life is full of vice, while His is full of grace and glory, all prepared for us if only we will give up ourselves. If our eyes were clear enough to see this eager craving of Christ Who hungers to make us whole, nothing could hold us back from rushing into His open mouth.

This will seem but foolishness to all save those who love, and who, so doing, understand.

The love of Jesus is of a noble sort, feeding those whom He has consumed, so that when He has eaten us He gives Himself in return. He bestows at the same time the power to enjoy; He gives eternal hunger and thirst, and to this hunger and thirst His body and blood as food. When in interior devotion we partake of them,

His blood, full of love, tenderness, and glory, flows from God into our veins ; the fire is kindled within us, the spiritual sense is awakened, penetrating soul and body, feeling, and desire. And the likeness of His goodness is upon us ; He dwells in us and we in Him ; and He gives us His soul with fullness of grace that we may abide in love and in the praise of the Father. Moreover, He promises and He shows us the eternal operation of Divinity.

There are men who have known God. Is it to be wondered at that joy has overwhelmed them ? According to the Scriptures, when the Queen of Sheba saw the riches of Solomon, his splendour and glory, there was no more spirit left in her, and she was lifted out of herself. And how can the poor glory of Solomon compare with the glory which is Jesus Christ ? To a certain point we are able to receive without losing our own spirit that which concerns His humanity. But when we touch His Divinity, adoration

bears us beyond ourselves into super-essential love, and our powers fail before the altar of the Lord, lost to us in homage and in the tyranny of love's demands.

As love draws its object within itself, so do we draw Jesus into us, and Jesus draws us into Himself and consumes us. We expand, swept out of ourselves beyond reason, into the innermost places of love; we eat according to the spirit, and, by pure love, seeking the Divinity, we stand before the Bridegroom, before the Spirit, which is His love, and this measureless love enkindles, consumes us and our spirit, and draws us into the unity, where we await beatitude.

To eat for ever and be for ever eaten, to rise and to descend unceasingly; such is our eternity. This is what Jesus Christ meant when He said to His disciples: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you."

THE MOUNT OF VISION

If we would that the name of Christ should be exalted in us we must follow Him in our spirit to the Mountain of Nudity, as Peter, James, and John followed him to Mount Tabor. This mountain symbolises the dawn of light ; and if we be Peter by knowledge of the truth, James by renunciation of the world, and John by the fullness of grace and perfect righteousness, Christ will lead us to the summit of our spirit, to the Mountain of the Nudity, into a vast and inconceivable solitude wherein we shall behold His glory in its Divine sovereignty.

In His name the Father opens the Book of Life wherein are written the words of Eternal Wisdom ; and the Wisdom of God enfolds our naked and pure spirit in the infinite sweetness wherein is perfect well-

being and wherein all things are forgotten.

In such exaltation to contemplate and to know, to experience and to feel, to have and to be are one ; and in such exaltation we shall stand according to the differences of our individual aptitudes ; for the Father in His wisdom bestows those gifts according to the excellence of each.

If we would dwell on Mount Tabor, on the heights of the spirit, on the Mount of Nudity, the light will for us dawn perpetually and increase continually. We shall listen for ever to the voice of the Father and shall feel always the touch of His hand drawing us towards interior unity. Those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus hear the voice of the Father : it is of such that He speaks when He says : " Behold my well-beloved sons in whom I am well pleased."

The measure of grace is according to His will. In the bliss of this love between God and man each possesses

his own name, his service, and his reward. To this refuge come the men of God, safe hidden from the men of the world.

The friends of the world are dead before God, and their names are lost ; neither have they any sense or feeling of the things of light. It is the touch of God that calls us to life in the spirit, gives us grace, enlightenment, and knowledge of the virtues. It strengthens our powers so that we may accept whatever He gives, so that we may even suffer His presence without annihilation. His touch draws us within, makes the unity of the depths, demands of us that death in joy that the spirit confers when the man is overwhelmed in beatitude, in eternal love, in the unity, the perfect bliss of the Father and the Son.

When we climb with Jesus the mountain of our spirit, to the summit of Nudity where are no images, when we follow Him with the single eye, with interior gladness, yielding to an

irresistible attraction, we shall feel that fire of the spirit which kindles and melts us into the Divine Unity.

When by the grace of that Unity we return with the Son of God towards our essence the voice of the Father will reach us saying: "Enter in!" To each of His elect He speaks the eternal words: "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

The Father and the Son, the Son and the Father, have from time everlasting felt joy in the future incarnation, in the death of Jesus, in the return of the chosen towards their eternal Source. So led back by the Son to our essence we hear the voice of the Father bidding us enter in; and this is the revelation of eternal truth. Truth itself reveals to us the immensity of the Divine joy, beginning and end of all joy.

Here, our own powers failing, we sink down, our faces to the earth, before the mountain of our nudity, and our unity is accomplished in the

supreme Unity of the three Persons. God gives life and joy, and all is then consummated, all is renewed ; we are baptised in the unity of love.

In this immensity of bliss each one finds his own portion. Rejoicing love performs miracles of union. Would we seek anything outside it? We have neither need nor power.

If we would meet God above the natural world, we must enter into Him by a quickened faith, and there, in simplicity, in peace, and freedom we shall dwell, confirmed in love, in perfect nudity of spirit. When love has lifted us above objects, above light, into the holy darkness, we are transfigured by the eternal Word, like unto the Father; and as the air is penetrated by the sun, so do we receive in that peace which passeth understanding inward piercing and outward shining light.

And what is this light save limitless contemplation and ever active intuition? We contemplate what we are

and we are what we contemplate, since our essence losing nothing of its distinctive individuality is united to that Divine truth that respects diversity.

In the simplicity we share with the Divine Spirit a common life, and "Lo, Father ! *this* is the contemplative life." To love God is most surely the better part. Contemplation of the Super-essential passes into communion.

Yet this contemplation has a further stage when life dies and love fails. For as we enter the darkness we are seized by the single ray, which, shining from the ocean of light where dwells our peace, immerses us in the Super-essential. Only after this absorption is the operation of measureless love experienced. For love cannot be inactive ; its life is a ceaseless effort to know, to feel, and to realise the boundless treasures hidden within its depths. This is its insatiable desire. This ceaseless attempt to grasp the unattainable is surely a swimming against the tide ; yet the object of this desire

can no more be given up than it can be attained ; to renounce is intolerable, to gain impossible.

Words cannot tell it, silence has no power to hold it within its bounds ; intelligence, reason, the creature itself, all are transcended, and desire has not yet reached its object. And if you look within the depths of yourselves you will find it is the Holy Spirit that has raised within you this tempest, that has swept you out of yourself to complete you in super-substantial Love wherein you will find the unity, and the heights and the depths transcending all abysses. This simple possession by God is the life eternal enjoyed in the fathomless abyss. It is herein, beyond reason, that we await the peace of the Divine changelessness.

Without personal experience there can be no understanding of these things ; for reason is ignorant of their mode. They subsist in their own state, stripped of all fashion of being.

Even in the transcending of ourselves we cannot grasp the infinite well-being that we feel though without understanding it. Poor in ourselves are we, rich in Him; in us hunger and thirst, in Him the bread and wine. Ceaseless activity and unending rest will meet together in eternity; for the possession of God demands and exacts perpetual activity, and whoever thinks otherwise deceives and is deceived. Our whole life is in God, immersed in bliss; our whole life is in ourselves, absorbed in action. And these two movements make but one, self-contradictory in its attributes, rich and poor, hungry, satisfied, active and at rest, sublime, pre-eminent, within time and within eternity, in the midst of His contending glories.

To become God Himself as to our created substance is impossible, to remain in ourselves, far from God, is supreme suffering. Eternity will hold us equally far from pantheism and hell.

Life in God ; life in ourselves, grace and activity, the Divine light which flashes from our highest aspiration, spurs us to just deeds ; then when we return to it after having fulfilled its demands by the exercise of active virtue, we pursue it into the abyss whence it came forth, but we feel nothing save the immersion in love, and we plunge, never to re-emerge, into the shoreless ocean.

When lost to ourselves and plunged in God, we possess ourselves in the abyss wherein we are lost. God is our end and we are His, for we fathom this shoreless sea only to find ourselves in the depths. This is the essential absorption ; vigil or sleep, oblivion or knowledge, all is one to it, for it exists always. The rivers pour ceaselessly into this ocean, each seeking its own place.

When we possess God, this immersion draws us, by the might of love, into the consciousness of the abyss, whence there is no return. If our

contemplation were eternal our consciousness would be eternal. This absorption passes the powers and the works of love ; it is the going out of ourselves which we accomplish amid light ; lost in another than ourselves we incline and move towards our own beatitude. For we experience an urgency impelling us from ourselves into another. It is the abyss which separates us from God felt in the interior sanctuary. It is essential separation.

Reason stands wide-eyed but unseeing in the midst of the shadow. Then within this darkness there dawns boundless light, darkness for us by reason of its blinding intensity. Enfolding us in its purity it transforms us into itself, and freeing us leads us into consuming love, into the gulf of beatitude where unity waits to give itself to us. And in this union living knowledge and active love are called forth.

As the visible sun vivifies, warms,

and gives light to the world, so the light of God, shining in the firmament of the soul, pours its radiant life into all our faculties. He fulfils us with the glories of His kingdom. And the infinite Love, which is God, alight in the purity of the soul like eyes of flame, enkindle by their flashes the senses, the will, and all the powers of the soul, evoking in them a tempest of love, an ecstasy, an impatience, a delirium, an ignorance. These flames from the eyes of God are the arms with which we fight against the sovereign attraction of His devouring love. With His gifts He arms us against Himself; He enlightens our intelligence; He exhorts us to defend ourselves; He says: "Wrestle with me."

If He gives us knowledge and wisdom; if He draws all our powers into the abyss; if He wakes in our hearts desire and longing; if He bestows on us the grace of contemplation and that winged aspiration by

which we soar beyond the realm of ourselves; if He kindles and melts our spirit in His presence; it is that we may guard and defend ourselves against Him with all the strength of our right to love.

ON THE HEIGHTS OF LOVE

Above knowledge I sense and discover an abyss of darkness, fathomless, limitless, and without qualities, above the names of created things, above the names of God. It is the end of transcending, the merging of the sublime in the nameless Eternal. It is the hope of peace felt to exist at the core of life, beyond the outer worlds, beyond the worlds of the soul; it is the infinite Beatitude, nameless, yet the central point where all names are one. It is the mountain crest of human effort and the abyss of the transcendent Essence, wherein the happy spirits, distinct, yet for ever immersed, are visible to the inner eye of contemplation, which sees in the Divine darkness Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: a Trinity of Persons, a Unity of essence, ocean of sure unending peace. And

if we should be lifted to these heights we should, by grace thereof, become the essential beatitude, the eternal activity and the immeasurable abundance of the three Persons, Who are Divinity and bliss in the simplicity of Their essence, ceaseless motion, and everlasting rest, love, and joy in the midst of activity and peace.

When we cleave to God by love we are spirit; but when the ecstasy is from God we are bliss itself.

Sometimes the spirit impels us outwards to exterior activity, sometimes it draws us inwards to interior peace; every transport of the spirit steeped in this intimate joy and every outgoing impulse of active love is a power that spurs man to a perpetual renewal of goodness and virtue.

As inbreathing and outbreathing maintain the life of the body, as man opens and shuts his eyes so rapidly that he has ceased to notice their alternations, so we die into God and live from Him; so do life

and death obey the same law of unity.

All the heavenly hosts are but shining flames set alight at the one great altar. It is here where we are one with the Father and Son in the unity of the Holy Ghost, the eternal fire; it is here where the nameless God, in the infinite darkness, simple in essence and without qualities, shall be for us and for it substance and bliss.

The Father begets the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, His everlasting Wisdom, the Word by whom all was created, in the unity of essence. But the Holy Ghost, the third Person, proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is the love of the one for the other; Their infinite love by which They are united in an everlasting union. One God in three Persons enfolds us in the unity of this same love; a Unity in Trinity, a Trinity in Unity; God, sovereign Power Whom we must seek, pursue

and possess by the grace of Jesus Christ, with the sincerity of an unfeigned love, to live in Him as He in us, to dwell with the saints, to acknowledge the communion of love. Then will the Father and the Son embrace us in the transfiguring unity of the Holy Ghost where we meet the love and the joy of God ; a joy that is without measure in the essence of Being.

Beyond this is no expressible reality ; only the simple, the infinite ; beyond this, lost utterly, we flow and merge into the Divine darkness. Herein lies the majesty of life and the crowning of death, the glory of joy and of eternity.

Pray for him who by God's grace has written this. Pray to God for all who shall read these words. May He give Himself to them and to him abundantly and eternally !
Amen !

THE PEACE OF THE HEIGHTS

The summit of the mountain is the steadfast dwelling of the soul in righteousness, in virtue, and in the strength of God. Pure love makes the spirit pure, and the man who yields himself to them is delivered from the bondage of creatures. He enters into peace. For pure love frees a man from himself and his acts, and confirms his spirit in the peace of that possession wherein is consummated the Divine union.

If we would know this in ourselves we must yield to the Divine the innermost sanctuary of ourselves, petition a like return from God, and cast out our own powers. Our love must outweigh all else, and sinking into the very substance of the creature find no resting-place till it meets God in the abyss where He dwells alone.

It is here that the intelligence is fulfilled with eternal truth as the air is suffused with the radiance of the sun. Here Divine love enters into us as fire enters iron. Here is the kingdom of God. From here comes the impulse and urgency towards active righteousness and virtue, **FOR LOVE CANNOT BE IDLE.**

The Spirit of God, moving within the powers of the man, urges them outwards in just and wise activity. It makes of us a holy tabernacle, then ebbing back it draws us within the interior life. It opens our eyes upon the glory of God and makes of us, alike in our substance and our activity, a single, sublime sacrifice. And the stability of righteousness remains in us.

But when we experience simplicity, possessing all well-being in the super-essential Love, we dwell in the depths of ourselves, in the peace of the Essence, established above all objects, in the higher unity. This experience

is ours when we enter, free of all our burdens, into the simplicity of essential Love. Here we taste eternal joy, that joy which can say, "I have no end."

FALSE PEACE

In the spiritual life it is necessary that we should recognise, that we should renounce and destroy in ourselves, quietism; for the quietists seek quiescence, and that they may the more tranquilly enjoy this false peace of the spirit they refrain from both interior and exterior activity. This peace is an outrage on God, it is the crime of lese-majesty. Such quietism blinds man and plunges him into a state of nescience which is below, not above, knowledge; and the man remains immersed in himself, effortless and useless; his repose is idleness, his tranquillity the forgetting of God, of himself and of his neighbour. It is the opposite of the Divine peace full of activity, full of love, full of desire and of knowledge; that burning and insatiable peace that is

sought the more ardently the more it is found. Between this high serenity and quietism there is just the difference that exists between God and one of His deluded creatures.

He who finds his peace outside of action, who yields himself to a tranquillity without performance, has lost the way; he has turned from God to return upon himself, seeking his rest therein. This false contemplative is like a merchant who desires only profit, who cares only for himself. There are amongst such quietists many who lead lives of great austerity and self-denial, who undertake the severest penances, but they seek always to be seen of men, and it is from them they look for their reward.

Such self-love finds zest and savour but in itself. It may happen to such men to obtain the vanities they desire, but it is Satan who gives them; God delivers them over to the father of lies, and they attribute to their own sanctity the success of efforts that

have in reality won only the fruits of hell. Their souls interiorly furrowed by pride, their eyes closed to the Divine light, satellites of themselves, immersed in the depths of themselves, they are overcome with joy when, as the result of this quiescence, they experience some interior consolation, all blind to the immensity of the joy they are missing. They hope on this descent to experience a certain enthusiasm, certain enjoyments and zests of the soul. It is spiritual luxury, the love of pleasure which, turning a man in upon himself, holds him in the prison of self, saying: "Happiness lies there."

Such men, always self-willed, are inwardly grown rank with spiritual pride; their lives are contrary to charity, contrary to interior love, to the spirit of the quest for God, to the hunger and thirst of him who seeks only the glory of God. For charity is the bond of love, it is the bridge between ourselves and God and leads

to union with Him. Self-love finds no way out save to return upon itself, and leads to isolation. Sometimes its interior effects resemble those of the real love as one hair is like unto another. The infinite difference that divides lies in the spirit that inspires them. The real love seeks only God and offers all to His glory; self-love seeks only itself and offers all to self.

The man who falls from charity into self-love is seized upon by four enemies: pride, covetousness, greed, and luxury. So fell Adam, and with him humanity. There was covetousness in his eagerness for knowledge: there was greed in his desire for its fruits, which brought self-indulgence. The Virgin Mary, the living Eden, knew riches beyond any lost by Adam, and supreme love was the Son of this Mary. She turned towards God with the impulse of fervent love; she conceived the Christ and offered Him with all His powers wholly to God. Always humble, she had not sought God's

favours, and receiving had not held them for herself. Whoever follows in her steps will conquer his enemies, and will enter the kingdom where the Virgin reigns with her Son in Eternal glory.

There is a third kind of quietist, more dangerous, more pernicious than all the rest. Enemies of God, they believe themselves to have attained to the heights of contemplation, but their words and deed betray them. They take quiescence for liberation, and because they feel an interior void they believe themselves united to God without intermediary. Presently they declare themselves above all commandments, beyond religious exercises, too deeply merged in grace to be concerned with action. They fear to disturb this quiescence by the practice of even the most sublime virtues, so greatly do they value it. Thus yielding themselves wholly to it, they renounce all action, good or bad, since it disturbs, they say, the presence

of God in the soul. They dwell in an interior void, without fervour, without virtue, praise, or act of grace, without will or prayer, love or desire. They seek nothing, for in thus giving themselves to an empty quest they believe they have attained all. Believing themselves to have no longer either possessions or desires, God Himself can give them nothing more, can raise them no higher ; and in the completeness of their quiescence they hold themselves free of all duties, as they believe their interior liberation has released them from all obedience. They listen no longer to the voice of the Church, to Pope, bishop, or pastor, being beyond all that. Sometimes the shadow of obedience still lingers, but in reality they revolt against religious exercise, bound to perpetual passivity. To act, in their view, is to cease to be perfect, to stoop to earth in the practice of virtue robs them of poverty of spirit and interior repose.

They regard themselves as above

the saints, above the nine choirs of angels, beyond merit and demerit, virtue and sin, equally incapable of progress or failure, united to God as to essence, and annihilated as to substance ; such is their quietism and their pantheism. They do not hesitate to yield to the impulses of the body, since absence of sin has freed them from law. If, say they, we refuse the body that which it demands we shall disturb the repose of the spirit. Give to the body that which it demands, otherwise you risk the disturbance of the spirit's quietude.

Men of themselves set forth on this erring quest, content in their self-absorption, not even seeking God by desire. It is not He Who holds them in this deceptive inaction, for this is an emptiness of soul and idleness of body that surely and steadily drive the soul downwards. . . .

The man who yields himself to peace devoid of activity, goodness, and effort, is lost : he attains but to spiritual

pride and interior satisfaction and becomes an incurable. The seed of every sin lies hidden within this quiescence. It is the fall of the angels. Those angels who remained faithful turn towards God bearing His gifts, seeking refuge in Him with the fervour of active possession : and beatitude, an endless, unfailing peace, is their portion.

Those who have returned into themselves demanding peace of themselves have fallen into quietism ; they are cast into outer darkness on to the whirling wheel of change and stress.

THE EFFECTS OF LOVE

The eternal love fills all the capacities of the soul with grace and light, thus bringing to birth the virtues. The grace of God touches and awakens the higher powers ; from it come charity, enlightenment, love, and justice ; from it come also adoration, active and discerning, of the Divine order, freedom that dwells beyond the world of forms, victory without weariness, and that sublime failure, effective and fruitful, that plunges us beyond ourselves into the unity of the spirit. It is a marvellous activity, bringing to the contemplative as he steadfastly perseveres, the joy of realising the Divine unity without intermediary. He experiences in himself that ghostly quickening that is the renewal of grace and of the virtues ; for grace flows even into the inferior

faculties. It reaches to the depths within man and awakens that profound and vital love that is the desire for God ; and this love penetrates even to the heart, to the senses, to the flesh and blood, to the whole physical nature of the man.

It evokes in him in this state of exaltation such extremity of ardour, of impatience, and of tension, that he knows not how to contain himself. For this love intoxicates, and, like that other intoxication, it expresses itself in strange modes ; so that if the contemplative be lacking in self-restraint he will find it hard to control himself. Some raise their eyes to heaven in the impatience of their longing, some weep, some sing, some cry out, some gesticulate, some leap for joy or sorrow, while others run. Sometimes the hands are clasped, and the contemplative stoops, sinking on his knees.

Just in so far as he perseveres, reaching towards the treasure of God

and living in the spirit, will he feel this quickening; and the urgency of love will be renewed within the depths of him, with all the joys of which I have written. From this physical impression he should raise himself to a spiritual impression, and from this to a Divine one, and so plunge into the beatitude that knows no change.

The sense of stability is the keynote of the superessential beatitude, the bliss of God in which His children participate.

This beatitude, which is essential to God, is superessential to us, the mystic silence of eternal peace. The holy Trinity of Three Persons is merged in the essential Unity of love; yet each one, according to His attributes, maintains a perpetual activity.

ECSTASY

The men of love in their contemplation are in presence of the Divine flame, that treasure possessed by both heaven and earth. They feel the Holy Trinity very near to them, full of grace in Itself, full of grace to them ; and justice and sanctity adorn them within and without. Thus are they united to God by grace and their own virtue ; and because they give themselves to God in their every action, in omission and submission, they possess peace and joy, consolation and a zest that neither the world nor its lovers, nor such as prefer themselves to God, can realise.

These interior men, the men of light, hear always the call of love that bids them enter the *One*. If they feel themselves borne with all the company of the redeemed into the bosom of the Father and of the Son and of the

Holy Ghost, they know that they are being restored by eternal love to their birthplace in God.

Contemplation, simple and single in aim, retains the likeness of its spiritual Prototype, dwelling immersed in the peace of God. Thus the spirit is lifted by ecstasy towards the Trinity and towards the Unity, by a threefold mode ; yet the creature is never confounded with God, never becomes God. The union is made by love ; and the creature sees and feels between itself and God an eternal and invincible distinction. However close may be the union, heaven and earth, fashioned by the hand of God, yet hide for the spirit of the contemplative impenetrable secrets. When God gives Himself to a soul, between Himself and it stretches a measureless abyss ; but the powers of the soul merged in simplicity suffer the Divine transfiguration. This is plenitude and excess. The spirit feels the truth, the glory, and the Divine union, but it

feels in itself an essential movement towards its own original status, and this innate bent preserves in it the sense of the essential abyss that exists between God and it. Nothing grander than this sense of distance exists. The Unity is a power that draws for ever inwards all that it had placed in the world, naturally or supernaturally ; and thus are the men of light freely rapt above reason into the region of clear vision. There divine Unity dwells, thence it calls to the contemplative. There the single eye is penetrated and illuminated by the eternal light, as the air is penetrated and illuminated by the sun. There the naked will is transfigured by the Divine love, as fire by fire.

The unveiled spirit rises, it feels itself enveloped, strengthened, established, by the immensity of the formless Father. Thus above reason the created image is united by a triple cord to its eternal likeness, the origin and source of its life.

THE SEVEN GIFTS

THE GIFT OF FEAR

Fear is that gift of the soul that produces humility; and humility inclines us to obedience, and obedience seals us with the likeness of Christ. For Christ yielded to the desires of the patriarchs and prophets; He fulfilled their aspirations, He answered their prayers and obeyed their call. In countless ways He gave up His own will according to the scriptures, and He did the will of His friends. He obeyed His Father by a ceaseless reverence, by an act of perpetual grace, by the surrender to Him of His every action. He made Himself the servant of men, He washed the feet of His disciples, and came to earth not to be served but to serve.

He who possesses the gift of fear will find that it operates upon the passional element in his nature, corre-

sponding to its earth. From the earth spring forth trees bearing fruits, and those fruits are the riches of the soul intent upon God and in reverence offering to Him all her possessions. This earth bears health-giving and sweet-smelling herbs, and these are humility and obedience. The wild and savage animals that roam over the earth are the senses and the desires; dominion over them is the possession of the reason submissive to God, and the reason is the chief treasure of the earth.

God has placed man in the midst of this Garden of Eden that he may guard and cultivate it, causing it to bring forth truth and virtue, weeding it of all that is contrary to these. Sin is the loss of the fruits of the earth, and even of Eden itself. Within this garden God has planted the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. On the latter grow the tempting fruits that Satan and the world offer to the senses, to the

woman. And the woman offers them to the man, to the higher reason, into whose charge God has entrusted this paradise. All its consolations and pleasures may be enjoyed save those of the corrupt desires; but he who tastes of such fruit is cast forth from peace and joy naked and despoiled.

THE GIFT OF PIETY

Piety produces in us that compassion which is directed towards Jesus and towards men, for compassion is born of devotion. It leads us to the suffering, the sick, the lonely ; it gives bread and wine and shelter ; it comforts the living and buries the dead. Jesus Christ wept when He beheld the sorrows of Jerusalem, the sorrows of His enemies ; He wept with Martha and Mary and shared their mourning at the tomb of Lazarus ; He fed the five hundred with five loaves and two fishes.

He who possesses the gift of piety finds that it operates especially on the passions, corresponding to the element of water. It is like the rivers of the Garden of Eden : for it leads the desires in four directions. The first flows towards heaven, being our

compassion for Jesus and for the martyrs who suffered in His name. This is a joyous flood full of rapture and the action of grace, since the suffering it pities belongs to the past, and has been turned into eternal joy.

The second river flows towards purgatory, and is man's pity for the souls who in suffering pay their debt to justice. Its prayers are spoken in the deep places of the heart, for we have all loved ones who have need of our prayers.

The third river of compassion flows towards the earth, and embraces the whole of the Christian world. This interior act, full of deep love, of immense scope, gives more and operates more effectually than would all the exterior works if united in one single act.

The fourth, the stream of charity, flows towards all who are poor; it inclines a man to give his goods and to spend himself, to bestow also the

alms of counsel and encouragement.
This stream meets great obstacles:
and the four rivers together water the
Great Garden.

THE GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

The gift of knowledge is a supernatural illumination infused into the rational soul, and guides men's steps into the way of the higher perfection. When man has shaken off the yoke of the demon, he has met the fear that loves; and he has by the light of the Lord within the depths enlightened the irrational appetites. When he has opened his soul to pity and compassion, he has turned the Divine light on the passions; but discretion must rule fear, and pity must discriminate in persons and things, times and seasons, and in due proportions; and this is the operation of knowledge, which pertains to the intelligence, and sheds upon it the light of the spirit.

This gift brings to man the knowledge of himself, and with this knowledge tears of deepest self-contempt.

To such were addressed the words of Jesus Christ: "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be comforted."

Those who weep are those who know.

This gift is a Divine resemblance, for God knows all in an eternal knowledge. He contemplates eternally all His creatures in their everlasting type, which is co-substantial with Him; it was according to this knowledge that He gave to the heavens, the earth and all that it contained, power, kingdom, and glory. It is according to this knowledge that He answers all those whose whole life, whose every act and every word, is directed towards Him.

It is also according to this knowledge that He enlightens, within and without, all the men of light in the measure of their capacity. Jesus Christ was full of this knowledge, and His every act was conformable to this glorious light. He who possesses this gift brings perfection into the domain of the intellect.

The gift of fear which rules the irrational desires, operates especially upon the earth which is under our feet; for these desires are the lowest forces. The gift of piety, which governs the passions, operates more directly upon the water; for compassion surrounds the worlds. The gift of knowledge, which rules the rational desires, operates principally upon the air that supports the birds as the earth bears the trees.

There are birds that move on the earth and in the water, and birds that fly in the air, and of these some that fly towards the heavens. I feel the fire near to these. Those that walk upon the earth are like the men that give their possessions to the poor, kindly, wisely, and generously: such men serve the body. Like the birds that swim in the water are those men who, abounding in compassion, hold the world within them, pitying and loving their brothers, and giving to every man the immense service of a

deep and sincere charity. As the birds that fly in the air are those who look into the depths of themselves with a keen and holy penetration, reviewing every single act in the piercing light that shines within the spirit. Such men are merciful and wise to themselves.

Yet beyond the region of the air is the ether, and I would fly to that like the eagle; I would, like the eagle, soar beyond the world of spirit into the fire of God. Every act and every virtue shall soar towards His glory on the wings of unquenchable desire.

Thus we have three gifts for the three regions: fear for the irrational desires that stir in us, piety for our passions, and knowledge for our rational desires. This is the active life, and he who practises it secures for himself the gifts of God.

THE GIFT OF STRENGTH

We have considered the kingdoms of the earth and of fear, of the water and of piety, of the air and of knowledge, and now turn to the gift of strength and the kingdom of fire.

The first three gifts regulate and adorn the active life, that of strength orders and adorns the effective life.

This gift lifts the soul above creatures. It reveals to them the qualities of the Divine Persons, the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, the goodness of the Holy Ghost. It clothes the soul in a perceptive love which redeems the memory. All the powers of the soul awaken and unite; denial of the world increases within the intelligence, and it feels assured that henceforth no creature is strong enough to prevent the offering of

itself to that mercy which is without end or beginning. The gift of strength breaks our bonds and absolves us of the creature; the lower desires are overcome, and all the powers of the soul unite upon the mountain. Prayer is born on the lips and in the heart from the action of grace and sincerity, and desire grows like a fire set alight. That which is seen, eternal truth, infinite wisdom and splendour, holds within its innate beauty the power to kindle him who contemplates it; and the measureless desire thus awakened lays hold upon the very stronghold of the soul.

The more the contemplative turns towards that which alone is desirable, the deeper grows this wound. Sometimes he experiences such an intensity of interior bliss that he can hardly endure it and knows not what to do nor what may befall him; he believes that none before have experienced such sovereign happiness. This is

joy, properly so called, and he wonders if he shall survive its intensity. Yet so long as the ecstatic is in the presence of a witness the ecstasy is restrained; for God guards the honour of His friends. This is spiritual intoxication, this is sublime folly.

It was of this gift of strength that our Lord spoke when He said: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

The gift of strength acts more especially upon the fire, the freewill. As fire, the glory of the material world, holding the highest place within that realm, tends by virtue of its essential quality to soar upwards, at the same time acting with extreme subtlety within the creature, so does freewill mount continually, upborne by desire, for God has granted to the soul the supreme favour of finding no rest within the creature. May its desire for God be as a kindled fire: may it be safeguarded from all false

doctrine: may it seek knowledge according to nobility and virtue!

Eternal Wisdom watches over the ascent of the aspirations that by strength they may be borne within the realm of unity, and grace and beauty flow down upon the aspiring soul according to the purity of its desire. The ebb and flow of this ocean awakens eternal thirst, and those who are borne by their longing into the shoreless sea feel hunger and thirst and taste of union; but as the unity is inexhaustible, the thirst is perpetual. Jesus Christ at the heart of this fire, of this love and longing, stoops continually to the needs of men, compassionate of the sorrowful, for He possesses the gift of strength in its fullness. He who prays with justified faith is answered, for Christ has paid our debts; He has given His blood and His flesh that He may penetrate us body and soul. . . .

THE GIFT OF COUNSEL

The gift of Counsel, of resolution, is a certain urgency, a certain touch of the hand of the Father which confers on the soul a supernatural nobility. It does not know what it experiences nor understand what it feels; and the more it seeks to know, the greater seems to grow its ignorance. For this consciousness is altogether special and peculiar, evoked by the fervour of desire and consummated by God upon the mountain of the spirit. It is a flame set by the hand of God upon the crest of this mountain, and in so far as it is a created light it can be secured and felt, but in so far as it is Divine it escapes the seeker and awakes only a keener vehemence of longing.

The soul continues to dwell in this unity on the heights of her interior life, but she descends also that she may act.

She cannot contain God, for she still acts according to limitation : her light, love, and activity are of the creature, and it is this which causes her to strive and struggle with ceaseless effort. And as she feels that the enemy is invincible, that God still escapes, she searches the realm of spirit with the clear gaze of recollection for aught there may be to set in order, correct, or modify. Into this realm of the spirit there pass the messengers of wisdom and zeal, urged thereto by the hand of God and the soul's holy madness. Promptitude speeds in conformity with the nature of zeal, under the spur of God's urgency and the burning flame of the Divine contact ; reason, servant of wisdom, searches and considers. Yet they go hand in hand, ruling and ordering ; and their search reveals great lack of virtue and absence of justice, righteousness, and excellence. Reason sees the malady, but not the remedy, and so together the two return towards the source of

unity, making full confession, and offering the prayer that they may taste God else they wither and are consumed.

Love hears, and, knowing the suffering of this state, sends pity and clemency.

Wisdom orders all according to light and justice; pity and clemency are her companions, and zeal their minister. But love bestows grace with both hands, and of her Divine compassion the poor of the kingdom of spirit receive forgiveness, and that kingdom enters into the glorious possession of unity.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Compassion and the gift of counsel are united, and those who possess them give alms to all creatures, and, having turned in pity to all suffering and sorrow, they follow compassion itself into the heart of God, into the Unity, till of themselves they have strength to go no further.

SUBLIMITY OF THE GIFT OF
COUNSEL

He who would possess the gift of resolution in the fullness of perfection must seek the likeness of God and rest content with no lesser excellence; he must, borne on the tide of love, reach and find anchorage in the super-essential Essence. Those who find and merge themselves in the super-substantial Essence find immeasurable bliss: they receive an abounding joy, the pure light of the power of unity. Those who pass into this holy place, beyond the reach of earthly weariness, cannot escape the strong hands that plunge them into the naked light where they flee far from themselves by a sublime flight, never to return. And it is they who become the throne on which the God of all joy rests with all His angels. Thus unfalteringly

shall we aspire, unfolding to the super-essential Essence : supported in the outer world by discipline, by truth, by activity and righteousness, we shall build our inner kingdom in the likeness of the Lord our God.

Only a flood tide will bring us to anchor in the safe harbour of the superessential Essence. Those who desire moderately do not receive the ray, are not touched by sublime ignorance, by essential blindness to human measure : they still dwell in themselves. They fall short of the light, they do not turn wide open, towards that place where man knows himself not. This is why the men of moderate desire are never devoured while on earth by the gaping jaws of beatitude.

THE GIFT OF INTELLIGENCE

When the man has felt the interior call of the Father, when he has been enlightened by the Son, and enfolded by the Holy Ghost, he has won the Divine likeness; but he must grow in that likeness. Greatly as he has received, he can receive a thousandfold more. The intelligence cannot reach a point of illumination where it has no longer desire for further light; neither can the soul be loved so abundantly that it desires no more love.

Man was created out of nothing. This is why he pursues the nothing, which is nowhere, and in this quest he travels so far from himself that he loses his own track, and, plunging into the simple Essence of the Divinity, as in his own element, he dies to himself in God. Happy are those dead who have died in God.

God dwells in His Essence, in the

bliss which subsists of itself, and contemplates that which He enjoys.

In our joy the light fails in the holy darkness of superessential ignorance, but in contemplation the light does not fade, and our contemplation is as eternal as our joy.

Those who feel the light fade are those happy and hallowed ones who have found refuge in the great solitude of the Divinity, where the Lord possesses and enjoys His own Essence; and the light fails because the Divine Essence knows no human measure. Such men are the tabernacles of the Lord, immersed and rejoicing in Him for ever.

This death is but the birth of the contemplative life, and it is the gift of intelligence.

God eternally contemplates His Essence in bliss: but when He bestows His likeness on us He lends us love and all the impatient longing of love: He gives us peace only when He unites Himself to us.

The light by which we contemplate is immeasurable; the very object of contemplation is something neutral and indeterminate, the fathomless and formless abyss : and that is why these two things cannot be held the one by the other. But the gaze of contemplation, lost in superessential ignorance, remains turned towards the glorious face from whence the joy shines, towards the face of highest Majesty, near to the heavens where the Father, in the light of His wisdom, contemplates His infinite and inexhaustible Essence.

The greatest contemplative of all times was Christ ; here I speak of His humanity substantially united to the Person of the Son. But He was ever at the service of men, and never did His ineffable and perpetual contemplation diminish His charity or His exterior activity. For the glory of this gift of intelligence consists in deed joined to contemplation. This is the source of freedom.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Blessed, indeed, are those to whom, amidst daily labours, the superessential Nudity reveals itself in sublime and holy contemplation.

THE GIFT OF WISDOM

Wisdom is a certain sensibility felt on the summit of the spirit, and which penetrates the intelligence and the will in measure as they are recollected in the holy habitation wherein wisdom dwells. This immeasurable and inexhaustible consciousness welling up from the depths of the interior abyss, flowing towards the outer life and fulfilling the capacities of the soul according to the measure of each, reaches at last to the body, which it does not disdain to touch.

The other senses, as hearing and seeing, have their play in the outer world ; they look out upon the created realms and upon the world of creatures made subject to man by God. Wisdom, on the contrary, springs from the depths of the interior ; above and below the spirit, it rules and supports

it. Above the spirit it becomes incomprehensible Immensity dwelling in solitude. It is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and love is beyond understanding. Such is the measure and extent of this realm that it seems as though heaven and earth and all that they contain melt before your eyes and only the void remains. And the scope of this perception is boundless; it plays in the world above, below, within and without; it springs from a fathomless and pure source, and its outlook is in the region of simplicity.

This is the birth of a higher contemplation. The spirit knows that it can never seize this incomprehensible joy because it seeks it by created light; its gladness lies in that it fails in such contemplation. Transfigured by measureless, boundless radiance, the spirit lifts sleepless eyes towards this inconceivable and unattainable bliss.

Those who contemplate by created light, and according to the measure

and method of creatures, receive certain intellectual experiences that spring from the abyss, and bring enlightenment and joy; they learn that that which they love is veritably immeasurable, and that no creature could of its own nature conceive it. The soul dwells in its sublimity, unattainable to reason; on its simplicity, the Λ and Ω of multiplicity; on its beauty, the peculiar glory of heaven and earth; on its splendour and bounty. It contemplates the Divine attributes: it contemplates that Life in which all live; victory, consummation, wholeness, peace, refuge, bliss, consolation, harmony, principle, and essence of joy. Words die and the power of the soul to feel fails before a recompense which once partaken of can never be forgone; a pleasure so perfect that those who have known it find life intolerable without it. It is a consuming fire, an invincible power; Divinity that overwhelms: eternity, goodness, bounty, love, excellence,

fidelity, truth, wholeness, fervour, light, satisfaction, strength ; a gift which surpasses the bounds of desire and hope.

The enlightened man contemplates these intellectual attributes ; but in so far as they are contemplated they are creations, reflections emerging from the abyss of Divinity. Behold the way by which all return towards the abyss whence they had their beginning and have their ending. Contemplation fails here because it draws near to the sanctuary wherein there dwells only God.

God shows His kingdom to the enlightened man under its aspect of grace or of glory. This experience befalls the man in a region beyond the senses, beyond the natural world, beyond any knowledge gathered from the Scriptures. It is not contrary to the Scriptures, but they have not revealed it, and no man can find the living words that would express what God gives to loving souls : that fruit and excellence of all virtue, manna of

the angels and of the children of the Kingdom! There are those who know well-being, but lacking Divine love they fall short of its excellence. There are some who know well-being with love, but without intoxication in God its quintessence is not yet theirs. That he may know it, man must be lifted by the hand of God to the summit of his spirit and must be established in that holy place whence issues the active life of virtue, and to which soars that transcendent contemplation, fervent, clinging, super-essential. . . . Amen!

This supremely active Divine love impels the man outwards towards exterior perfection and manifested righteousness; but in measure as it turns him within himself, facing towards the interior abyss, it is essential, and every part of him is filled by the incomprehensible Life. For this is the fathomless gulf in which noble souls find their joy, and in which they are swallowed up. It is

the radiant sun shining on the summit of the mountain, drawing us towards the things that are eternal. It is the living spring that arises from the depths and pours itself forth in seven streams; and those who follow it to its source pass from light to light, from gladness to gladness. In the fire of this dawn gleams the dew of ineffable joy, and the spirit melts in bliss. God possesses Himself boundlessly, and His Essence says to measure: "I do not know thee."

The kingdom of God is seen by love in the midst of limitless light; it is seen beyond the realm of reason, in the depths of the soul that has entered into the superessential Unity of God. Here the man receives three gifts: infinity of light, inconceivable love, and Divine joy. This is the source from which shines forth all enlightenment in contemplation or in exterior activity, and the intelligence so hungers for it that it plunges within it essentially, seeking perfect union.

Fathomless love fills the whole kingdom of the soul according to the measure of its capacity, and the soul melts in pure love. When such light and love have invaded and possessed the whole of this kingdom, then the hour of its fruition has come. It is great with a Divine greatness, so that the saints and all holy men are held within the depths of this soul by a certain ignorance, a certain loss of measure. To be plunged into this abyss is the highest experience in beatitude, and the man who has reached it is the joy of all creatures.

Possessing his spirit, as a king his kingdom, he knows how to turn outwards and to hold out his hand in help to his brothers; for he is standing before the image of the active Unity, of God in three Persons, who comes with all His gifts when the creature calls Him in its need.

On the crest of his spirit such a man will remain essentially near to God,

that he may be transfigured in endless, boundless light.

The three Persons dwell eternally and ceaselessly in the abyss of the Essence, where joy abounds. Yet, according to the mystery of the Divine nature, the distinction between the Persons subsists, and they maintain their distinctive attributes and operations. So man, pledged brother to every creature, will dwell on the summit of his soul between essence and power, between joy and activity, essentially abiding in God in the abyss of fruition and in the depths of the darkness; for the holy darkness is not only the supreme beatitude of spirits: it is the supreme bliss of God.

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